WHITE SANDS
DESIGN | BUILD

SO YOU'RE READY TO BUILD YOUR BEST BEACH LIFE?

FANTASTIC.

Here are 10 breezy exercises to help you identify your beach house style, wants, and needs.

ONE

MAKE A SELF-SCHEMA.

This is a very helpful getting-to-know-yourself exercise that lays out your identity in clear terms. Since our homes are an outward reflection of our inner selves—a mirror of how we spend our time, what we find important, and who we aspire to be—it's key to start the custom-build process with a strong sense of who that home will reflect.

This exercise should be completed by every adult in the household, and it could even be fun to do with teens and older children. But know that you only have to share the aspects of your self-schema that you want to share. Sometimes this exercise can almost feel too personal, and you may want to keep certain self-descriptors private.

Okay, ready to get started? Everyone needs their own paper and pen, and then you can transfer your answers here, to the Beach Journal, if you'd like. But no one should be influenced by anyone else's answers, which is why you do this on paper first.

Number your paper 1-20. Write "I am…" at the top of the page. Now set a timer for four minutes and, as fast as you can, fill in that "I am" statement. Your self-schema may start with things like, "I am a mother, I am a son, I am a [profession], I am a science nerd, I am an art collector." Some of your statements may be more about your emotional state—"I am happy, I am anxious." They may also reference your hobbies—"I am a traveler, I am a runner, I am a movie-buff." Regardless, don't think about it too much. Just write.

(That's why you set the timer. This whole exercise should be completed in 3-4 minutes.)

When you're done, share what you want from your list with your household members. Sometimes these lists directly translate into custom-home features. If "I am a swimmer" is on one or more of your household member's lists, you probably need to think about incorporating a pool. If "I am very social" is on your list, maybe you need a bar or outdoor living room for entertaining. If "I am spiritual" is on your list, maybe you need a meditation nook. It's always fun to see what pops into your mind, unbidden, when you make a self-schema.

SELF-SCHEMA

#1 I am _____

#2 I am _____

#3 I am _____

#4 I am _____

#5 I am _____

#6 I am _____

#7 I am _____

#8 I am _____

#9 I am _____

#10 I am _____

#11 I am _____

#12 I am _____

#13 I am _____

#14 I am _____

#15 I am _____

#16 I am _____

#17 I am _____

#18 I am _____

#19 I am _____

#20 I am _____

TWO

START AN ELECTRONIC DESIGN SCRAPBOOK.

This can be a Pinterest board, a Dropbox, a Tumbler account or a clipping app such as Evernote or Pocket. The point is simply to collect images that you find appealing from design blogs, architecture sites, magazine articles and home decorating pages. When you have a collection of a dozen or so images, you're able to hone in on a particular style you love, or see style and color patterns in even seemingly unrelated images.

You can invite the whole family to participate in this activity. Everyone can have their own folder or board in the electronic scrapbook (kids can have a folder for their bedroom, playroom or den), or you can all contribute to the same board or folder. You can add to this scrapbook throughout the design process, but you should have at least 10-12 exterior images and 20 interior images before beginning to build.

Something to think about: a trend ebbs and flows but a fad happens and isn't coming back…it's like leopard print versus shoulder pads. Fads are for accessories, not inlays.

SOME WEBSITES WHERE YOU CAN GET STARTED ARE

HOUZZ.COM | PINTEREST.COM | INSTAGRAM.COM

(SEARCH THE DESIGN STYLES IN THE SEARCH BAR)

SOME COASTAL-FRIENDLY ARCHITECTURE STYLES THAT YOU CAN SEARCH FOR:

- MODERN FARMHOUSE
- INDUSTRIAL
- MID-CENTURY MODERN
- CAPE COD
- MEDITERRANEAN
- SPANISH COLONIAL
- CONTEMPORARY LODGE

THREE

TAKE A WALK (OR DRIVE) AROUND YOUR NEW NEIGHBORHOOD.

Why walking? We tend to notice more details at a slower pace. On your walk (20-30 minutes) bring a pen and paper or use your phone's recorder app. As you stroll around the neighborhood, pay attention to details you may not have noticed before.

Record things you love about the houses you pass. Do you love that stained glass front door, or your neighbor's exterior stone? Do you love that house down the street, and its outdoor light fixture? What do you like about these things? List the design feature and the address where it's located, and maybe snap a photo. You can also note things you dislike, like the color of a certain house, or how a house seems to be designed in two competing, rather than complimentary styles. Why do you dislike a certain feature? How does it make you feel?

Hopefully at the end of your walk, you'll have a list of 10-20 design elements that you feel strongly about. Like the electronic scrapbook, this exercise will help you better understand what type of design you're drawn to. This exercise strengthens your eye for detail and helps you form fast design opinions.

DESIGN ELEMENTS

#1 _____

#2 _____

#3

#4

#5

#6

#7

#8

#9

#10

#11

#12

#13 _____

#14 _____

#15 _____

#16 _____

#17 _____

#18 _____

#19 _____

#20 _____

HOUSE #1

Address: _____

Likes: _____ Dislikes: _____

_____ _____

HOUSE #2

Address: _____

Likes: _____ Dislikes: _____

_____ _____

HOUSE #3

Address: _____

Likes: _____ Dislikes: _____

_____ _____

HOUSE #4

Address: _____

Likes: _____ Dislikes: _____

_____ _____

HOUSE #5

Address: _____

Likes: _____ Dislikes: _____

_____ _____

FOUR

MAKE A TOP TEN LIST.

What 10 things are must-haves in your new home? Maybe it's a rooftop deck, a steam shower or walk-in wine storage. Maybe it's two closets for the master bedroom or a private bath for each child. Maybe you want great sunlight at all hours of the day or maybe you want some rooms where you can retreat from the sun. Maybe you want a home theater or a custom exercise area.

This may be easier if you think about what you like and dislike about your current space. Do you love the giant vanity in the master bath, or does this feel like wasted space? Do you hate that the TV is the focal point of your living room? Does the kitchen feel cramped, or is it the perfect size? Do you love your open floor plan, or would you really prefer clearly delineated spaces?

Make two separate lists—10 must-haves and 10 things that either work or don't work about your current space. It may be fun (and surprising) for you and your partner to make separate top 10 lists and see how they overlap.

YOUR MUST-HAVES

#1 _____

#2 _____

#3 _____

#4 _____

#5 _____

#6 _____

#7 _____

#8 _____

#9 _____

#10 _____

YOUR CURRENT SPACE

#1 _____

#2 _____

#3 _____

#4 _____

#5 _____

#6 _____

#7 _____

#8 _____

#9 _____

#10 _____

FIVE

DREAM BIG

Okay, now that you have your 10 must-haves, make a list of 10 dream items. Do you want an indoor rock-wall? A Lara Croft-style aerial gym? A disappearing swimming pool? A custom dog-shower? Reading lofts in the kids' bedrooms? An indoor putting green in the basement? Put it on the list.

DREAM ITEMS

#1 _____

#2 _____

#3 _____

#4 _____

#5 _____

#6 _____

#7 _____

#8 _____

#9 _____

#10 _____

SIX

INTERVIEW FRIENDS AND FAMILY.

Do you know other people who have gone through the custom-build process? Ask them to coffee or lunch and quiz them.

What did they enjoy about the process? What was most frustrating? Did they feel like they got a good sense of what the house would look like from the architectural plans? What features in their custom home do they enjoy the most? What do they wish they'd included? Did they live in their home while it was being renovated? If so, what was that like? If they had it to do over, what would they do differently?

Jot down some key points that stick in your memory.

NOTES

SEVEN

TAKE A VACATION.

This exercise has two separate parts—one that's relevant if you're doing a foundation-to-floor build and another that's relevant if you're remodeling a house you already own.

If you're remodeling, stay in a tiny house. Airbnb and Vrbo have a wide selection of small spaces you can rent, including tiny homes and campers. Or rent an RV and go on a long drive. Either way, stay at least three nights in this space and cook at least three meals in it. Spend some time in this tight area, rather than spending all your time out and about. Watch TV or stream something on your laptop. Oh, and be sure to bring your whole family.

At the end of three days (or even better, a week!), have a family discussion. How did the time feel? Were there tons of arguments, or did everyone manage to get along and stay out of each other's way? At the end, are you super-stressed or relatively relaxed?

If things went well, you may be able to stay in your home while it's being renovated and large portions are inaccessible for days and weeks at a time. But if things didn't go so well, it's best to rent a temporary space during construction.

If you're doing a ground-up build, stay in a luxury home or hotel. You can find luxury homes on Airbnb Luxe, LuxuryRetreats.com, Luxury.HomeAway.com, or Villas of Distinction. While you're in this gorgeous space, take pictures of features you love, and notice what you like and don't like about the layout. Pay attention to furniture, fabrics, materials and textures. Do you love the reinforced glass railings on the rooftop deck? Did the outdoor fireplace just find its way on your top ten list (see Exercise 3)? Not sure what type of material is used in the living room wall covering but you know you like it? Take several close photos and note the texture.

Travel is about inspiration. Our defenses are down and everything penetrates more easily. You may surprise yourself by the things that you enjoy in this amazing space, or you may discover design elements you've never seen before and really love (or hate!). Either way, you're paying attention to design and to your own opinions about design, and these things are critical when you're making a huge investment, such as a custom-built beach home.

EIGHT

MAKE A BUBBLE DIAGRAM.

This is a design school trick that can help you better understand how you want your space to flow.

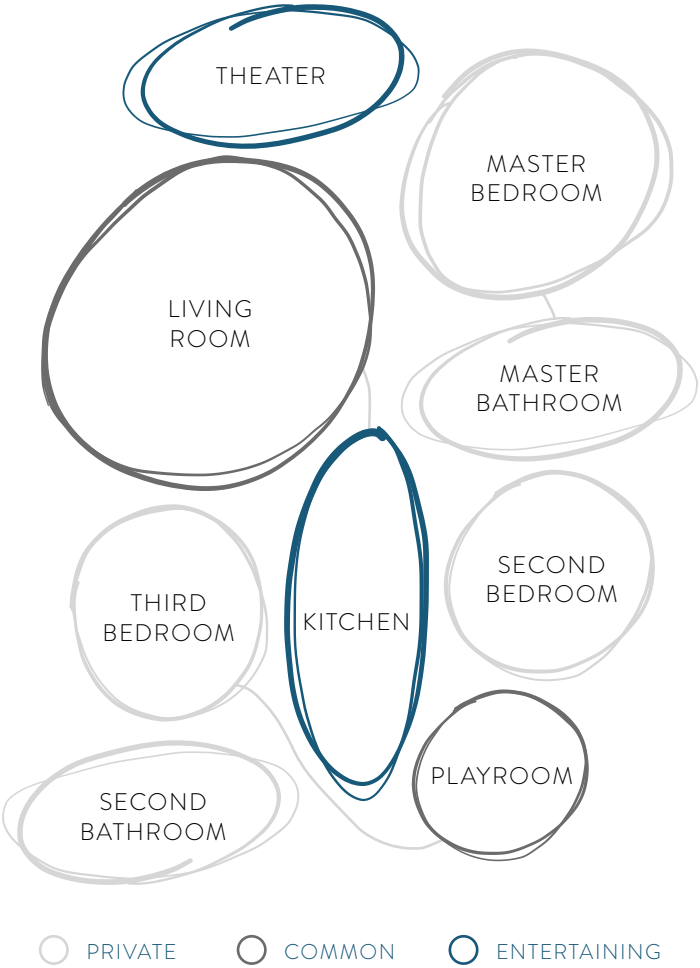
First off, choose three colors to designate three different types of areas—private areas, such as bedrooms and bathrooms, common areas, such as half-baths and living rooms, and entertaining areas, such as theaters, a formal dining room and an ocean-view deck.

Start with 20 bubbles. Write the names of rooms in the bubbles. Every space (except for halls) gets its own bubble, including the entryway. Be specific. Don't just write "powder room." Write "first floor powder room." Color the bubbles according to your color key. Now start drawing arrows to connect the bubbles to the bubbles they should be next to in a real space (even if those bubbles aren't near each other on your chart). Each bubble can have as many connections as you think it needs.

For example, should your entryway be connected to the first floor powder room? Should the living room? If the answer is yes, draw arrows from both of those to the powder room. Should the living room connect to the pool deck? Draw that arrow. Should your kids bedrooms be connected to their playroom? You get the picture. You don't have to use all 20 bubbles if you don't need that many rooms, and you can also add more bubbles, as needed.

Ultimately, your bubble diagram may look messy, but it will help your designers figure out how your family moves through space, as well as which spaces you want to show guests and which you want to keep private. Down the line, this bubble diagram will become an invaluable design tool.

EXAMPLE:



BONUS ACTIVITY

DRAW A ROUGH FLOOR PLAN.

Use your bubble diagram to draw a rough floor plan. Don't worry. This isn't to-scale or official in any way. It's just to get your creative juices flowing and help you gain an idea of what you might want your layout to (tentatively!) look like. Nobody's actually building from these plans!

HOW TO MAKE LEMONADE

NINE

GO ON FIELD TRIPS.

Check out high-end home supply shops or even retail shops. Go to specialty tile shops, appliance shops and local hardwood floor studios. Touch and photograph sample tiles and appliances. This will give you an idea of materials you like and don't like and features you want in specific appliances. Do you want a stackable washer and dryer or freestanding models? Do the freezers in standard refrigerators have the storage you need, or will you need an additional deep freeze? Do you prefer the texture of dark marble or granite? Do you like solid or engineered hardwood flooring? Take notes.

NOTES

TEN

VIBE OUT.

Make a list of the 10-12 key rooms in your house where you expect your family to spend the most time. This list will likely include bedrooms, the family room, the kitchen, the eating nook, and the master bath, as well as other rooms that are specific to your family. Don't forget to include outdoor "rooms" on this list, such as a rooftop deck or pool patio.

Besides each room, write three adjectives to describe how you want to feel in that room. Maybe you want to feel alert, focused and productive in the office. Maybe you want to feel capable, cozy and relaxed in the kitchen. Maybe it's carefree, playful and casual in your family room, or urban, sophisticated and sexy in your bar/entertainment area.

Now rank the rooms in the order of use you think they will get. Simply write a number beside each room. Maybe the family room is #1, the kitchen is #2, the master bedroom is #3, etc. This will help us know what colors and design motifs to use where, and it may also help with knowing where to invest more, budget-wise.

KEY ROOMS

#1 _____

#2 _____

#3 _____

#4 _____

#5 _____

#6 _____

#7 _____

#8 _____

#9 _____

#10 _____

#11 _____

#12 _____

CONGRATULATIONS!

You've completed the Beach House Journal. Now you have a customized map to guide you and your design team along this fantastic journey. Hopefully you and your partner have learned a bit about what's important to each other early in the process, so you won't have to argue down the line, when money has been spent and tensions are high. (You can thank us later, for helping you avoid home-related couple's therapy!)

We can't wait to learn more about you and your family through your Beach House Journal, as well as face-to-face. We like the saying, "Sky above, sand below, peace within!"

NOTES

WHITE SANDS

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WE EXIST TO HELP YOU FIND YOUR PEACE, THROUGH YOUR OWN PIECE OF SKY AND SAND.